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SUBJECT: VP HASHIMI SUPPORTS ARTICLE 140 IMPLEMENTATION AND UNAMI ROLE

REF: BAGHDAD 4068

Classified By: Senior Adviser David Pearce for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary and comment: Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi told the press December 16 after meeting with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani that he supports the implementation of Article 140 and blamed delays in the implementation on the security situation. He told Senior Adviser the week prior that resolution must satisfy the Iraqi interest as a whole and not specific sides. Hashimi offered that the United Nations could refine a process towards resolution. He said there is danger in moving too fast, but admitted that a roadmap is necessary to determine the way forward. For the Arabs, the thing that makes them the most comfortable is the United Nations role, which is what makes the Kurds most uncomfortable. End Summary and comment.

¶2. (C) Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi told the press December 16 after meeting with KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani that he supports the implementation of Article 140. He blamed delays in implementation on the security situation.

Senior Adviser told Hashimi in a December 5 meeting that resolution on Article 140 was difficult but it was also an essential element of national political accommodation. It would be dangerous to leave it alone. Sunni-Arab tensions are rising, creating fertile ground for the insurgency. Even if the issue is not resolved immediately, it is vital to get a transparent, fair and agreed process in place as soon as possible. Asked for his views on the best way forward, VP Hashimi agreed it was a highly sensitive issue. He said he did not know how long it will be pending; "I don't see any near term solution between the parties."

¶3. (C) Hashimi complained that the Article 140 High Committee only dealt with certain disputed territories and not all of them. He asked why the committee was only concentrating on Kirkuk (al-Tamim) province and asserted that a border dispute between Anbar and Karbala should not be opened. He said he had met with United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General Staffan de Mistura about a possible UNAMI

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role in the process. Hashimi reminded that the Kurds were very skeptical of any UN involvement.

¶4. (C) "We need someone outside of Iraqi factions" and neutral, Hashimi said. Resolution needs to satisfy the Iraqi interest and not that of specific ethnicities. He said he tries to be neutral and balanced, but the Kurds demand that Kirkuk join the Kurdish region now and a referendum be held by December 31. "We have many problems to address," so it was best to not open a new file now. Hashimi thought perhaps the issue should be postponed for two or three or four years.

Senior Adviser noted that a process was needed and the issue could not be shelved for a long period. Hashimi replied that perhaps a "roadmap for implementation" would work, rather

than an indefinite postponement. He said he was "very scared of the future" and the issue was "highly sensitive" as it would affect the future of Iraq. The Arabs and Turkmen do not want Kirkuk inside the KRG, he asserted.

¶5. (C) Senior Adviser agreed that the issue was difficult, and that there were risks in moving ahead, but there was a greater danger in leaving the matter to fester. There are also additional resources available now, with the presence of Coalition Forces and the arrival of a new UNAMI envoy with an expanded mandate. Hashimi replied that he appreciated U.S. advice. Senior Adviser said he was aware of the Sunni Arab perception that the U.S. and the GOI were somehow complicit in promoting Kurdish encroachment/ascendancy at Arab expense.

This was erroneous. The USG sought a fair and transparent process, agreed to by all sides. A simple postponement is not enough, Senior Adviser said, an agreed process is necessary as well. The UN can provide technical assistance, and there is a need for a way forward.

¶6. (C) VP Hashimi said he agreed that some perceived the U.S. as complicit in helping the Kurds gain Kirkuk and other disputed territory. He asked that the U.S. do more to address Kurdish encroachment. Hashimi offered that the United Nations could refine a process, figure out Kirkuk provincial demographics and check on newcomers to Kirkuk. This could take one year, he said, and once everyone is satisfied that those living in Kirkuk are original inhabitants or their descendants, "we could move forward." Hashimi repeated that Article 140 and resolving the status of Kirkuk and the disputed territories directly affect the future of Iraq. He asserted that there is danger in moving too fast, but admitted that a roadmap is necessary. Senior Adviser agreed, noting that tensions could be defused, and trust among the parties built, via an agreed process.

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